Extract from **Internationale Situationniste** at **Context XXI**

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Situationist News

n REUBEN KEEHAN (TRANSLATION) ■ SITUATIONISTISCHE INTERNATIONALE

The SI's Central Council gathered in Paris from 10 to 11 February. Apart from the six CC delegates (Ansgar-Elde sent an apology for his absence), eight other situationists present in Paris at the time took part in the discussion. Considering the worsening since the Göteborg conference of the opposition toward the SI from within the German section — particularly the content of issue 7 of *Spur;* the distrust and hostility that this group holds toward the comrades implementing the SI's directives in Germany and elsewhere; and its now undeniable collusion with the ruling class of European culture — a motion demanding the exclusion of Kunzelmann (one of the two German CC delegates), as well as that of Prem, Sturm and Zimmer, was presented by Debord, Kotànyi, Lausen and Vaneigem. Nash, rebuking those responsible for *Spur,* was in favor of them publishing a retraction, but stopped short of demanding an exclusion. After a debate on this subject, however, Nash decided on the option of exclusion, which was subsequently settled with a vote of 5 to 1. For his part, Kunzelmann approved of all the CC's critiques, but insisted that he was not personally responsible for any of the incriminating facts. Nevertheless, given the opportunity, he was unable to bring himself to make a definitive break with the others, and thus joined them in their exclusion. This exclusion was immediately made public with the tract *Nicht hinauslehnen!* The only person present and not implicated to express sympathy for the positions of the excluded was Lothar Fisher, who must therefore be counted among them.

With this affair out of the way, the CC turned to the discussion of a more precise definition of culture and everyday life, of the dialectic of the spectacle and the strike force that we are now capable of assembling. A theoretical discussion has thus been opened, which is expected to culminate in a coherent exposition in the form of a pocket dictionary of situationist concepts within the space of a year. A resolution was made for the creative détournement of the "popular university" in Denmark (cf. Mme E Simon's study *Réveil national et culture populaire en Scandinavie,* PUF distribution). The CC entrusted the publication of the SI's new German journal *Der deutsche Gedanke* to Uwe Lausen.

In terms of the exclusions, the CC decided that it would be better to limit numbers in order to exercise stricter control on admission to the SI, which is currently far too easy, by only selecting elements that are completely sound. Various sympathizers seem to think that there is something to gain from pretending to be converted (for example, it is well-known that the SI's Scandinavian section is easier to join than the *nouveau roman* school). If this is practiced, the SI can hope to accomplish its task with only several dozen more exclusions, that is to say with the least expense.

A reprint of *Internationale Situationniste* #2 is currently under way. It will be sent to those who have requested it in order to complete their collections.

We should draw attention to the substantial amount of typographical errors marring our previous issue, most of which occurred at the printers. To avoid any contention, note that page 11, first column, line 13 should read: "deliberately by the police"; page 13, second column, line 42: "the vanishing point of the planned environment"; page 14, at the end of the first column: "The society of free time and consumption is lived as a society of empty time, as consumption of emptiness"; page 15, first column, line 15: "a major embarrassment to the good people"; page 16, line 3: "a falsified need"; page 26, at the start of the second column: "the constantly recurring possibilities of alienation arising within the very struggle against alienation; but we should stress that this applies to the highest level of research"; page 30, second column, line 10: "not a religion. This is the conflict"; page 40, line 19: "for those who possess cultural resources."

While all these mistakes were corrected in most copies of *Internationale Situationniste* #6, this led to the creation of two new ones: on page 10, the caption should end "by destroying the natural link these objects may have with other objects, so as to have them become more than anything else a material environment with a high standing"; and in the second point of the

program of unitary urbanism on page 16, it should read: “are really useful only in reinforcing reification” (instead of “reedification”). But if that were the case, Kotànyi and Vaneigem’s readers would surely have reified themselves.

Owing to major differences on the political action to take in the wake of the great Belgian strike, André Frankin broke with our SI comrades in Belgium — and therefore with all other situationists — in March 1961, letting us know in a letter of 13 September the same year that he found all the SI’s ideas to be total rubbish, fishing in troubled waters, with the exception, however, of the few plagiarized in his own texts (published in issues 3, 4 and 5 of this journal). The least that can be said is that just as we he will no longer have anything to do with us, we will no longer have anything to do with him.

In a circular dated 27 October 1961, Maurice Lemaître and two other relics from the golden age of the lettrist avant-garde, finally conceding that the lettrist group is no more, while at the same time proposing that “lettrism is now beginning to find its rightful place” in esoteric history and major exhibitions, formed themselves into a kind support group whose members “are able to ensure that their names are associated with the phrase: the lettrist movement.” Already assured of the adherence of three other well and truly conservative mammoths, the signatories then addressed themselves to four people who had taken various sides in the conflicts of this avant-garde toward the time of its break-up. Finding himself among those solicited, Debord of course chose not to respond. Then, in a letter on 4 November, they tried again, concluding that his extended silence authorized them to report his acceptance in the imminent publication of their poverties. Debord then telegraphed them: “You filthy bastards. I forbid you to use my signature in any way whatsoever. Be warned.” They were smart enough to leave it at that. But their gesture was still rather peculiar, given that none of these people had ever shown the least interest in approaching a situationist before.

These particular sort of academics know that they are the SI’s sworn enemies, and know it so well that they devoted an entire issue of their interminable review to an almost frenzied denunciation of us *(Poésie Nouvelle* #13, October 1960); and that we ourselves have said (in issues 4 and 5 of *Internationale Situationniste)* that we hold their theory in extremely low esteem, to say nothing of what we think of several of their very lives. This incident therefore demonstrates their scorn for all thought, including their own. But they still feel the need to revert to this opportunism. And their talent at cutting and pasting is enough to show their vocation for engagement and reengagement in that wretched legion of arrivistes who haven’t even arrived. They’re grasping at straws.

In our previous issue, we reported on the threats of seizure that delayed the release of *Spur* #5, which included a collection of texts on unitary urbanism, and which was finally published in Munich in June 1961. On 9 November, after the publication of issue 6, a series of raids succeeded in confiscating every copy of each issue of the German situationist journal that the police could find; all the situationists were subjected to lengthy interrogations, and four of them were charged. In an initial pamphlet distributed the next day with the signatures of thirty-one people — most of them from the SI — in solidarity with the accused, the German section emphasized that “for the first time since 1945, a search has been carried out on the premises of artists.” The pamphlet showed the considerable intimidating moves that constituted the threats to ban publication, prosecution and even imprisonment (the demonstrated subversion appeared to have been mainly directed at religion), and by calling on the support of intellectuals and artists, led initially to additional charges of contempt of court. But as it turned out, this solidarity was expressed almost immediately in Germany and abroad, and the authorities were left to retract to the point of allowing the return of the confiscated publications. The remainder of the proceedings are at a standstill.

In its February 1962 issue, the German journal Vernissage having insinuated that the exclusion three months later of several German situationists could well have been linked to their problems with the vice squad, or to their drunkenness, a letter by the current German section on 15 March, approved by the rest of the SI to this modern art version of *Confidential,* affirmed that all the situationists are and remain in solidarity with those concerned with this affair, and pointed out: “the grounds for their exclusion is their refusal to follow the SI in all its extreme conclusions. In any case, we could not have reproached these comrades for the non-conformism of their behavior or their art. We would even go so far as to declare that, from the point of view of the editorship of *Vernissage* — that is to say from your point of view as lowly shopkeepers, servants and hustlers — we are worse ...”

Elsewhere, two German artists on whom the SI had always been able to rely for solidarity protested that on this occasion, they did not want to be counted among those who supported *Spur,* clearly demonstrating their sympathies with the police.

At the time of the November 1961 ambush at Kindu on Italian pilots serving in the UN’s occupying forces in the Congo, just as at the very moment of the execution of nineteen priests in Congolo last January, traces could be found of Colonel Pakassa and his troops from the Western Province Army. Unfortunately, colonel Pakassa was arrested shortly afterwards, at the same time that the Leopoldville government imprisoned the moderate Gizenga — as the start of the same process of liquidation applied to Lumumba — and while the Lumumbist mutiny of troops in Stanleyville was

quashed by General Lundula, several units being disbanded and numerous soldiers shot.

The journalists who praised Jean-Louis Bédouin's *Twenty Years of Surrealism* either didn't read it, or were unaware that surrealism effectively continued to exist for the twenty years following Maurice Nadeau's work. [1] It is also difficult to understand the warm reception for a book that describes with such little imagination a period of such little interest. The history of these twenty years is the history of the neglect of twenty years of modern art. And even within the tiny sector to which Bédouin limits himself, the information is really of very little consequence. Why talk, for example, of Asger Jorn's debt to the collage technique of Max Ernst (p.105), when Jorn has never hidden the fact that all of Ernst's work has influenced him heavily? Why openly consider the surrealist groups of three continents to be mere spin-offs of a distant headquarters in Paris, where nothing actually happens anymore anyway? Why mention *Ça commence bien,* [2] the 1954 tract "co-signed by the lettrists" on the Rimbaud centenary (p.278), except to gloss over the polemic between the signatories that ensued almost immediately afterwards? It can't be denied that this was interesting as an extreme case of the ravages of Stalinism on its enemies: the members of this particular lettrist faction, some of whom would later contribute to the founding of the SI, were treated by the surrealists as NKVD henchmen simply for having mentioned class struggle. A surrealist tract entitled *Familiers du Grand Truc* [3] declared that the lettrists would soon embark on carriers as bearers of false-witness at Moscow show trials. It's a shame the surrealists didn't stick to automatic writing, foreseeing that such and such a department store would burn down, or finding out what lay ahead for them in 1939. By choosing to attempt rational discourse instead, they made a wildly inaccurate prediction about a few people joining the NKVD (which even at stage was, of course, no longer), and are now completely incapable of seeing the future, let alone the present, of this year's models: Hantaï and Pauwels. [4]

Finally, the *leitmotif* of Bédouin's prose on almost every page is the credulous "youths," the "young people" who adhere en masse to surrealist doctrine, the surrealist generations that come and go like clockwork. Every year, there are new young people ready to stand up for the surrealist project, which has to be a good thing, right? And *what is it that they've done?* On this rather important point, Bédouin's account remains vague.

In December 1959, *The Meaning of Decay in Art,* an editorial note in issue 3 of this journal, pointed out that if Lucien Goldmann really wanted to accept, in his *Recherches dialectiques,* that "art as an independent phenomenon separated from other realms of social life" could be led to disappear in a future where it would be necessary to conceive of an art that would no longer be "separated from life," then he was declaring it from a point of view far removed from reality, because he did so *without recognizing its verification in the expression of his time.* He was still thinking in terms of the classical/romantic dichotomy, already so unfortunate in Marx. His subsequent progress cannot be ignored. In *Mediations* #2 (May-August 1961), he conceived *"very seriously and only as an hypothesis"* (the italics are his), the idea that "in a world where the inauthenticity of objects and people is, to varying degrees, universal, but where radical inauthenticity cannot exist, one would have to expect to discover"at least two structural stages of cultural creation: *the thematic expression of absence;* and, at a more advanced level, *the question of the radical destruction of the object."* Even more tentatively, he adds:"It goes without saying that the first characterizes a major movement within modern literature, from Kafka to Robbe-Grillet, and that it was perhaps even already an important part of the works like those of Mallarmé and Valéry, while the second forms the basis of non-figurative painting as well as a number of important currents in modern poetry."He also discovers, much to his amazement, that *people resist reification!* Page 153:"The provisional hypothesis that we are formulating today is that reification, which tends toward the complete dissolution and integration of different groups into a single society, has a character so contrary to reality, not to mention biology, that it engenders a more or less strong sense of opposition in *all individuals,* a resistance which can be more or less general and more or less collective, and which forms the backdrop for creativity."And thus in 1961, we suddenly see that the world, being what it is,"engenders literature with the absence of art and art with the destruction of the object." It's safe to say that Goldmann ignores this, for he is so enchanted by his discovery that he hasn't yet considered that the desert island on which that unexpected spiritual tempest stranded him might well be as heavily populated as the French concentration camps. The tracks of the Man Friday he is expecting to see there are those of every single cultural revolution of the last one hundred years.

We should quote the rather telling paragraph that makes up Goldmann's cautious conclusion: "These remarks are only hypotheses; naturally, they need to be clarified and verified by in-depth collective research that would take up to several years. Such as they are, they nevertheless appear suggestive enough to us that in the interests of this work itself, formulating and proposing them in the discussion has been extremely useful." You'd have to agree that despite the nobility of such honesty, it says a thing or two about the capacities of the researcher.

In August 1961, the art dealer Otto Van de Loo, brought to task in our previous issue (p. 41 [Situationist News]), published a long declaration entitled *Offene Erklärung zu einem Artikel der Internationale Situationniste,* in which he confirmed our entire version of the affair in a highly detailed but excruciatingly embarrassing style, to the point of asserting that no one could

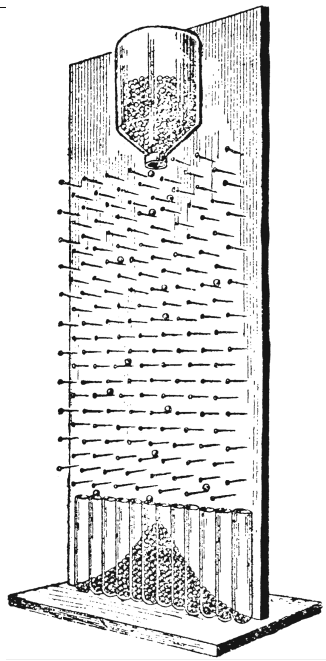
doubt the joke constituted by his telegraphed offer of a contract for 1,000 Deutschmarks a month to renew ties with a few artists on whom he had earlier put pressure in decidedly nobler and more sentimental terms. We'll let you be the judge of all those who think that the artistic economy is so extravagant to be so sure that an artist could produce any kind of return on 1,200 New Francs per month (especially when this sum, "unthinkable" in August 1961 because it was so high, has become unthinkable eight months later because it is so low). To bolster his denial, he added that works by these artists were worth nothing and interested no-one. But *to judge him by his own criteria,* he is either a fool or a liar, because this argument is effectively an admission that he was indeed interested in them as members of the SI, and that he planned to take advantage of their enterism in order exert a level of influence on decisions made by them in their capacity as situationists. He boasted that he had partially succeeded, and even that he was capable of continuing this influence because in the same declaration, he made much of the cordial personal relations he maintained with a few situationists at the time. He went so far as to draw on this argument to throw the seriousness of the information in the SI journal into doubt. We therefore stand by all our remarks in IS #6, underlining that we are not declaring our opposition to a specific art dealer — which would mean that we could investigate alliances with others — but that we are protecting the SI from outside pressures with the most definite measures. And to prove it, and to bring this incident to an end, we will point out that all those whose cordiality formed the basis of Van de Loo's postcards from 30 August have since been forced to leave the SI.

In Sweden on 15 March, Jörgen Nash and Ansgar-Elde suddenly declared their opposition to the Situationist International, and set about converting the Scandinavian section into yet another "Bauhaus," hoping to use the seal of situationism to attract a few highly profitable art dealers. The development of this conspiracy was no doubt precipitated by the recent elimination of the SI's right wing, on whose support the Nashists had relied. (In the case of *Spur,* the project was discovered to be a sort of National Situationism, organized as an autonomous force, seeking to expand into Switzerland and Austria, which found support in Northern Europe). In their declaration, the Nashists did not shy from resorting to the most outrageous lies, going so far as to give the impression that on 10 February, at the SI's last Central Council — in session under some sort of alleged pressure from the streets! — the minority were intimidated by cunning use of the atmosphere of civil war that has apparently been prevalent in Paris for the last two years *(alas!).* They even thought that they needed to enlarge this miserable minority by bolstering their enterprise with someone else, whom they asserted retrospectively was a member of the CC, when the entire SI knows that this is clearly not true. The Nashist gangsters can expect no reconciliation with us.

On 23 March, the Central Council of the SI delegated the Danish situationist J.V. Martin complete power to represent the Situationist International in the zone covered by the Scandinavian section (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) until the Anvers Conference; to immediately regroup all the authentic situationists; and to co-ordinate every means necessary in the struggle against Nashism.

JV Martin organizes the resistance with loyal elements following Nash's putsch.

Translation: "Sabotage! Contact headquarters by space radio!"



[1] Historie du surréalisme *(1945-48).*

[2] A Good Start. *The LI responded to the surrealists' tract with the leaflet,* Et Ça finit mal! *[And a Bad End!].*

[3] The Great Friends of the Grand Truc: *a reference to the bourgeois politicians in* Chant de guerre parisien *[Parisian War Cry], Rimbaud's poem on the Commune.*

[4] Simon Hantaï (b.1922), Hungarian-French painter, and Louis Pauwels (1920-1997), author and editor of the science fiction journal Planète.

Situationist International: Situationistisch / Situationist: All das, was sich auf die Theorie oder auf die praktische Tätigkeit von Situationen bezieht. Derjenige, der sich damit beschäftigt, Situationen zu konstruieren. Mitglied der situationistischen Internationale.
Situationismus: Sinnloses Wort, missbräuchlich durch Ableitung des vorigen gebildet. Einen Situationismus gibt es nicht — was eine Doktrin zur Interpretation der vorhandenen Tatsachen bedeuten würde. Selbstverständlich haben sich die Anti-Situationisten den Begriff „Situationismus" ausgedacht.

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